WOMEN OF LONG AGO.

PICTURES OF LIFE IN CHALDEAN AND EGYPTIAN TIMES.

Laws Favored the Sex In Those Days—High Position Conceded the Mother, the Wife and the Widow—Women Dealt Much In Slaves—Adopted Children.

The marvelous resurrection of the past which has resulted from the labors of the explorer and decipherer often raises strange problems for the student of social life in this nineteenth century. The vast amount of literary material recording every detail of the social life of Chaldea and Egypt 5,000 years ago enables us to construct a picture of the life of those days more complete in its accuracy than we can make of that of the manners and customs of our own ancestors, the ancient Britons. This wealth of material is due, says W. St. Chad Boscawen in The Queen, to the fact that both Egypt and Chaldea were lands in which the profession of the "man of letters" was held in the highest respect, and to hold any social position a man must be a scribe. This love of letters also produced an important change in ordinary everyday life. In a land where large numbers of the people were educated and could read and write it soon became a recognized axiom in law that no transaction, however trivial, was legal unless it was accompanied by a written and duly attested record. This being the case, the number of commercial and legal documents which were written was enormous, and it is not surprising that the British museum should possess some thousands of these documents, extending over a period from about B. C. 2300 to within a century of the Christian era. These documents, being essentially the chronicles of the people, naturally give us a wonderful picture of the life, manners and customs of those remote ages.

One of the most interesting features which they reveal is the very high position, both social and legal, which was assigned to women, especially to the mother, the married woman and the widow. We have long been acquainted with the main features of women's rights in the times of the later Babylonian empire during the age of the Jewish captivity, B. C. 606-538, and it was evident the rights accorded them then were no new concessions, but the result of a long established custom. It is now shown by some tablets recently acquired by the British museum that these same rights were as fully established in the twenty-third century before our era as they were in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. These tablets contain the records of the trading and legal transactions of a form which had branches in Ur of the Chaldees, Sippara or Sepharvaim, Larsa and other cities in the land of Nimrod when Abraham and his fathers were still resident in Chaldea.

The first inscription I select is a small clay tablet, which furnishes us with interesting details as to the rights of two classes of the female population—the female slave and the wife. The inscription reads as follows:

"A female slave named Mutibasti, whom Sinbilanu has presented to his wife. The sons of Sinbilanu have no right of reclaiming. All the children whom Mutibasti from this day shall bear are the property of Saddassu (the wife). Zinikbisa is also the daughter of Saddassu."

Here we have an extremely interesting transaction. The man presents a female slave to his wife and stipulates that in case of his death she shall not be claimed as part of the estate by his sons, but remain, together with her daughter born before her transfer and any future children, the property of the wife. The name of the wife is redolent of the poetry of the age, for it means "his beloved one," similar to the well known Egyptian name of Mert or Merit, "the beloved." This tablet indicates that certain rights were accorded to the wife on the death of her husband.

The laws of property are very clearly set forth. On the death of the husband the property went to the wife, probably the chief wife, who administered the estate until the children came of age. The adult children then could claim their portions, that of the elder brother or firstborn son being twice as large as the others, the widow also having a double share and a payment equivalent to her dowry. The division was usually settled by a "family council," presided over by the widow and the eldest son, but if an agreement could not be arrived at the property was thrown into the court of chancery of those days—namely, the treasury of the local temple—and division made by the priests, a portion, as costs, no doubt being given to the treasury of the god.

Even in those remote days women were extensively engaged in commercial life, though, I am sorry to say, usually in the slave trade. There is one document in the series in which all parties, vender, purchaser, chattel (female slave) and the witnesses, are women, the only men being the scribes who wrote the deeds.

Wealthy women seem to have done a considerable business in leasing out slaves for stated periods of hire, and I may quote one example: "A slave named Mar-Sippar, whom Marduk Nazir, from Munapirtu, his mother, has leased for one year. The money for the year shall be 2½ shekels of silver. For wages (to the slave) one-half shekel of silver he shall pay."

In Babylonia, as among the Hebrew people, it was the great desire of the wife to bear a male child, and the tablets before us show that there was many a prayer like that of Hannah offered in the temples of Chaldea 5,000 years ago. To meet the difficulty of succession extensive resort was made to the custom of adoption, a careful code of laws with regard to which had been formulated at a very early period. Adopted children were usually infants of tender age, as, according to the law, the man was bound to provide a "wet nurse" and at a later period to clothe and educate the child, giving him a deed of adoption duly attested in the temple. I will quote one of these deeds as an example: "Mar-Istar, son of Iltani and Nadinat-Sin. Iltani and Nadinat-Sin adopted to sonship. When Mar-Istar to his father and his mother says, 'Ye are not my father or my mother,' they shall sell him for silver (as a slave). But when at any time Iltani and Nadinat-Sin shall say, 'Thou art not our son,' he shall take and carry away his portion like the other children of (the parents)."

It is curious in all these deeds that the name of the mother is always mentioned first. This is, of course, a survival of the ancient law of matriarchy current in Egypt and Chaldea, when the descent was traced through the mother and not the father. If a son denied his adopted father, he was, according to the law, to be "branded on the face, chained and sold as a slave," but if he denied his mother he was branded and driven away from the house and town.

Cultivate a Capacity For Tears.

A capacity for tears—abundant, warm and ready ones—is, says a physician, one of the surest preservatives of feminine beauty. It is a grievous mistake to think tears can injure the sweetest eyes or dig furrows in any face when their rain is fresh and most frequent. They are the natural outlet of emotion, a sort of liquid lightning rod in which excitement and passion are most easily and rapidly dissipated. Sweet Alice, that wept at a frown, retained until late in her career rounded contours, unfurrowed brows, dimpled lips, shining eyes and her hair so brown. So do nearly all weeping women who can let rivers of hot salt tears course down over their cheeks. It is she who keeps up a power of thinking, who has few tears to shed, and those flow with an effort, whose facial lines and gray hairs come early. A capacity for tears is worth cultivating, since not only does a lack of them score heavily against one's freshness of face, but has its marked effect in general temperament. The women who weep easily have correspondingly light hearts, tender, demonstrative and impulsive ways and a charm the dry eyed women lack.—Chicago Tribune.

Girlhood's Charm In Woman.

The woman who keeps the simplicity of her girlhood, its generous impulses and quick sympathies, and who adds to her natural gifts the enlargement of study and the crown of experience, is always at her best and never past it. When the exterior attractions of form and color diminish and depart, as they mostly do, the radiance of our inner illumination will more than compensate their departure. But in order that this should be so her moral must equal her intellectual gain. She must be willing to learn not only her powers, but her defects also, and to court the good influences which can help her to escape from the delusions of sense and the fatal tyranny of self consciousness. She must discard the petty measures of vanity and self seeking and learn to love her race, her country and the humanity which she should help to adorn.—Julia Ward Howe.

An Economical Suggestion.

It will pay the woman who has a little money to spend on white goods and hosiery to go round—not round the bargain counters, but through the regular departments. It will also be to her advantage to learn the science of stuffs, so as to be able to tell cotton from linen and lisle thread. Manufacturers are clever. They understand the art of finishing so as to make cotton look like linen and thread like silk. The manufacturer's laundress is a genius. She has brains in her flat-iron, and she can do up a little square of batiste so cleverly that the average shopper will pass it and buy it for linen lawn. Then, too, the knitters will design a lisle thread garment, touch the top stitch with silk, and along will come a woman with $1.99 and snatch it up under the delusion that she is getting pure silk. And that's the way the money goes.

Woman at Her Physical Best.

The question as to the mental and physical ripeness of womanhood is not one that can in its physical aspect be answered arbitrarily, and I prefer to consider the physical side first, for the sake of its antithesis, writes Amelia E. Barr in The Ladies' Home Journal. Climate, heredity, constitutional tendencies, the influences of home, of nurses, of teachers, localities and associations are all important factors and exert influences on maturity so variable as to be beyond estimating. But it is quite safe to say that in temperate climates and under ordinarily favorable circumstances a woman is physically at her highest point of perfection from the age of 25 to 35.

Patch the Table Linen.

Tablecloths, unless the breaks are quite small, should be patched when holes appear. First baste a square of the same material under the hole, then cut the edges of the hole even, turn under and hem down to the patch as neatly as possible. Then turn the cloth on the wrong side and hem the patch down to it in the same manner. This adds a neat finish to both sides, and the cloth will be flat when ironed. If there is a figure, stripe or any given pattern, try to match it when patching. Always mend before washing, for you cannot do it so well afterward, as the washing and ironing stiffen the edges of the tears.—Philadelphia Times.

The Black Haired Woman.

It is rarely one sees a woman's hair of the absolute inky hue of Hamlet's cloak, but when one does be certain the dusky chevelure is a great beauty. In these days of uncertain drabs and grays and browns and the "tinted" blond a fine head of black hair is very conspicuous, particularly when its possessor happens to be a handsome girl, with fresh, clear skin and the blue eyes which always "go" with just such black hair. Such a type is seldom seen, but it is pure Irish, and no greater beauty than this real Celtic beauty can be found among all the Saxon, Latin and oriental races.—Boston Herald.

James Russell Lowell's Daughter.

Mrs. Edward Burnett is the only child of the late James Russell Lowell. She was a very pretty, attractive young girl, much admired by the undergraduates at Harvard as well as by the large number of people whom her father's fame drew about them both. It was one of Miss Lowell's grievances that she was supposed by all the acquaintances whom she made to have all the wit and wisdom of her parent. It is a stock story concerning her that when she was asked, as she generally was, "Do you care for poetry?" she always replied fiercely, "No, I hate it."

Made a Fortune Keeping Boarders.

There is a certain young widow in New York who within a few short years has made a fortune at that usually the most unsuccessful of all occupations—the keeping of boarders. She has purchased a $100,000 house, with elevator and all hotel conveniences, and charges her very swell patrons the prices of the Waldorf. Table napkins, with one's own initial upon them, and linen, also one's exclusive own, are among the luxuries. And she boasts that young men take their dinners at her house when they "get tired of Delmonico's."—Philadelphia Press.

Children's Employment.

Give a little child congenial employment, and he will almost invariably be happy and good natured. Toys alone are not all that he requires. His active little mind demands the stimulus of intelligent occupation even at the early age of 3 or 4, and it behooves a mother who has the responsibility of his mental growth at heart to provide the wherewithal for development. There is something very touching and beautiful in seeing an intellectual woman of real ability interested in the rudiments for the sake of her little child.

The Odd Plum.

Bertha and Mabel had come to visit their cousin Alta. They were swinging in the hammock when Alta's mamma came out with a dish in her hand.

"Here are some plums for you," she said.

"Oh, how luscious!" cried Bertha, "'cause we don't have any at home, and we're so fond of them."

"We don't have any either. Aunt May sent mamma these," said Alta. "I've only had one."

"They are just as big as pullets' eggs," said Mabel, "and so yellow. I never had any of this kind."

"I'll divide them," said Alta. "There's one for Bertha, one for Mabel, one for me, one for Bertha, one for Mabel, one for me—and here's one over. I do wish things would come out even. I'll have to count out, and the one that is out first will have the odd one:

"Eny, meny, ickery Ann,
Filacy, folacy, Nicholas John,
One, two, three, out goes ye.

Oh, goody! I'm the one."

"Maybe you knew how 'twas coming out," said Bertha.

"'Tisn't polite to have more'n your com'ny," said Mabel.

"'Tisn't polite to hint that folks cheat," said Alta, "but we'll draw cuts, and then no one can say it wasn't fair."

She cut three slips of paper and placed them in a book, with only the tops in sight.

"Now, the one who draws the shortest can have the plum," she said, "and nobody can say a word or look cross. I shan't anyway."

Bertha drew, and Mabel drew, and the shortest slip of paper was left in Alta's hand.

"There, now, you see it was meant for me to have it," she cried, jumping up. But she forgot the plum in her lap. It rolled down to the ground, and a big turkey gobbler who had his eye on it caught it up and ran off with it before the astonished girls could speak. They looked at each other a moment. Then they all began to laugh.

"'Twas all because I was so selfish," said Alta. "I guess my mother would be ashamed of me if she knew it."

"We were just as selfish," said Mabel.

"When we were com'ny, too," said Bertha.

"Wait a minute," said Alta. She ran into the house and soon returned with a small paper bag.

"Here's four choc'late creams, two apiece," she said. "It's to punish me for being so selfish, 'cause I had saved 'em to eat myself."

"You must have two," said Bertha, "else we won't be punished, and we were just as bad."

Then the three little girls sat in the hammock and ate their plums and "choc'late creams" as happy as three little girls could be.—Julia D. Peck in Youth's Companion.